



September 3, 2002

Mr. Philip D. Fraissinet
Bracewell & Patterson
711 Louisiana Street, Suite 2900
Houston, Texas 77002-2781

OR2002-4929

Dear Mr. Fraissinet:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 170305.

Bracewell & Patterson ("Bracewell"), which represents the Santa Fe Independent School District (the "district"), received a facsimile request for legal bills sent to the district in connection with a lawsuit styled *Ward v. Santa Fe Independent School District*. Bracewell argues that the request is not a proper request and alternatively asserts that the information is excepted from public disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.107 of the Government Code.

While the requestor and Bracewell disagree on the effective receipt date of the facsimile request, neither party disputes that the requestor faxed a request for information to Bracewell rather than the district. For purposes of the Act, a written request sent by facsimile transmission must be sent to the officer for public information or the person designated by that officer. Gov't Code § 552.301(c). Bracewell explains that it is neither the district's officer for public information nor the officer's designee. Thus, the request that was faxed to Bracewell was not a proper request under the Act, and Bracewell need not respond to the request as it fails to comply with the Act.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the

full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

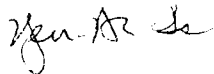
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Yen-Ha Le
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

YHL/sdk

Ref: ID# 170305

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Kelly J. Coghlan
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(w/o enclosures)